



10c



No. 22

TIM HOLT

as Red Mask!





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TIM HOLT and his trusty six-gun on the alert for lawbreakers.



FROM THE RIO GRANDE TO THE LLANO ESTACADO, THE MAN WITH THE CAPE AND SWORD ROAMED AND ROBBED, RUTHLESSLY, EFFICIENTLY, VORACIOUSLY. HE STRUCK AT RAILROADS AND BANKS, AT STAGECOACH LINES AND HELPLESS RANCHERS! HIS MEN SWEEPED AFTER HIM IN A DEVOURING TIDE, AND THOSE WHO KNEW WHERE HE KEPT HIS LOOT—NEVER LIVED TO TELL ABOUT IT!

AND WHEN REDMASK RODE INTO THE LAND WHERE THE CAPE ROVED, FATE DREW HIM ON THE TRAIL OF DEATH THAT WAS TO END IN THE DEADLY—

CAVE OF THE THREE SKELETONS!

THE WAVE OF A SPANISH RAPIER IS THE SIGNAL FOR THE CAPE'S ONSLAUGHT—!



TIM HOLT

BANKS YIELD THEIR COINS AND GREENBACKS....!

A GOOD HAUL! NOW THE CAPE OWNS ALL THE ASSETS OF THE CHISOS BANK!



EVEN THE NEW DIAMOND-STACK RAILROADS FALL VICTIM TO HIS HORDE

ONE OF YOU SWING UP INTO THE CAB! THE OTHERS WILL TAKE THE DYNAMITE BACK TO THE BAGGAGE CAR!



BUT ONE OF THE PASSENGERS SHOWS FIGHT—FOR TIM HOLT IS TRAVELLING TO TEXAS TO BUY SADDLE STOCK FOR HIS RANCH...

HOLDUP! YOU UNARMED PASSENGERS GET FLAT ON THE FLOOR—!



WHILE THOSE OF US WITH COLTS WILL DO WHAT WE CAN AGAINST THOSE KILLERS!

Yiiii!

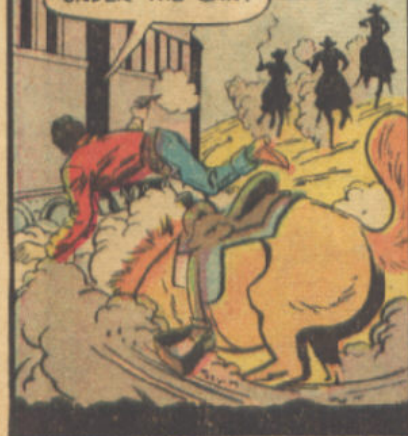


I'LL BORROW YOUR HORSE, HOMBRE! MY OWN IS IN THE CATTLE CAR... NO TIME TO GET HIM OUT!

GMM PFFF!



MORE OF THEM! AND THERE GOES THE HORSE... I'D BETTER DIVE UNDER THE CAR!

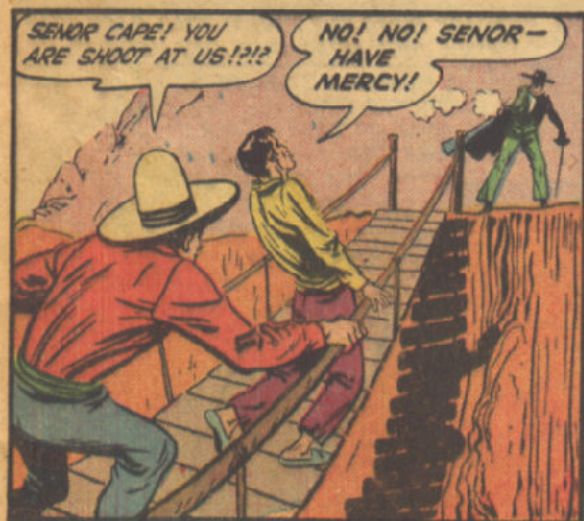
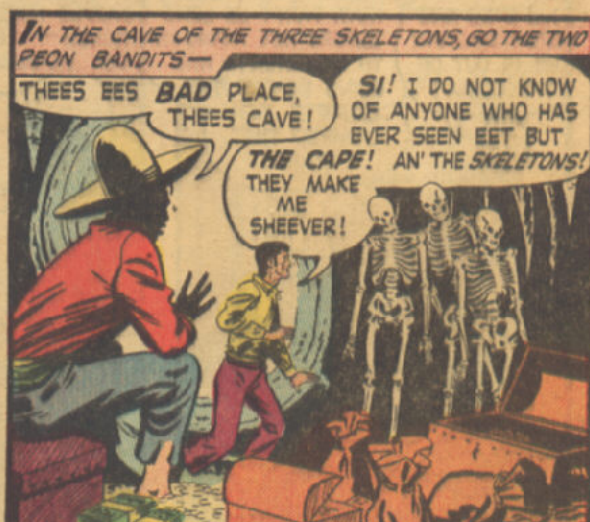
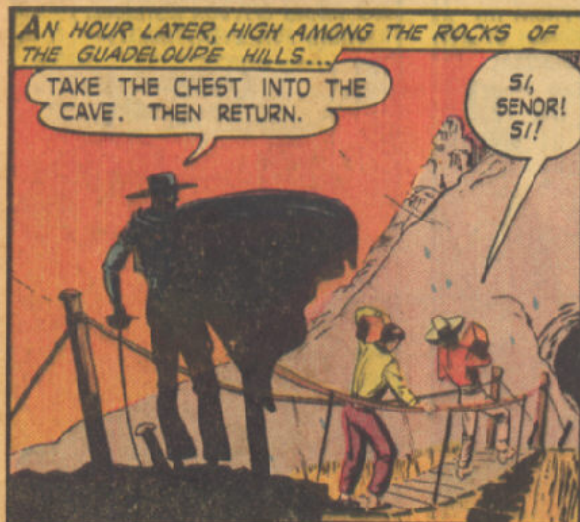
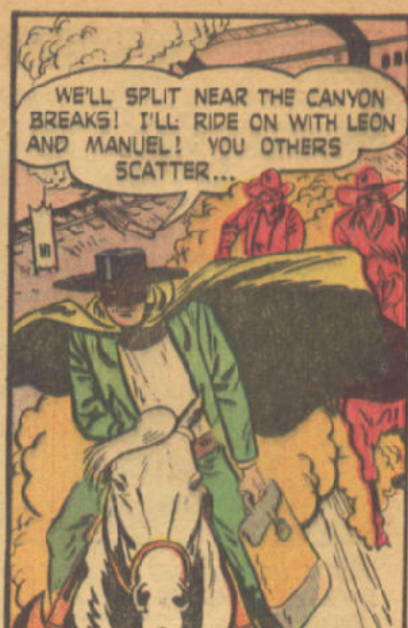


THAT TWO-GUN RANNY IS DUCKIN' UNDER THE BAGGAGE CAR! I'LL GET THE BOYS—

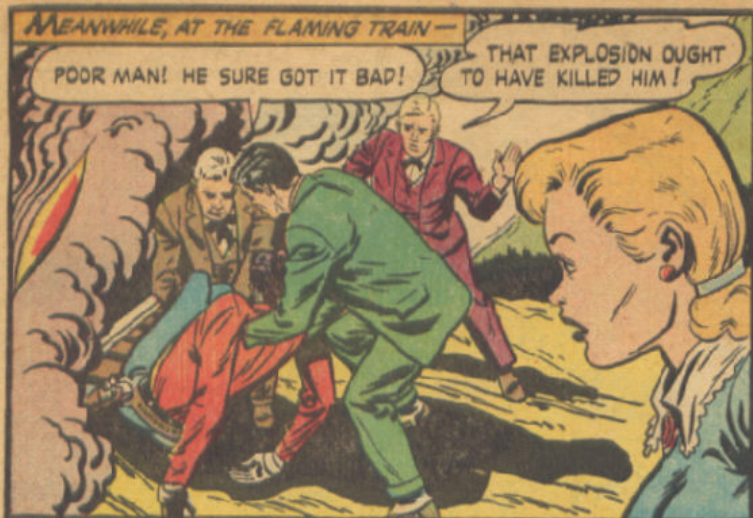
FORGET HIM, YOU FOOL! HE DOVE UNDER THE BAGGAGE CAR! WHEN WE BLOW UP THE CAR—HE'LL GET BLOWN UP WITH IT!



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT



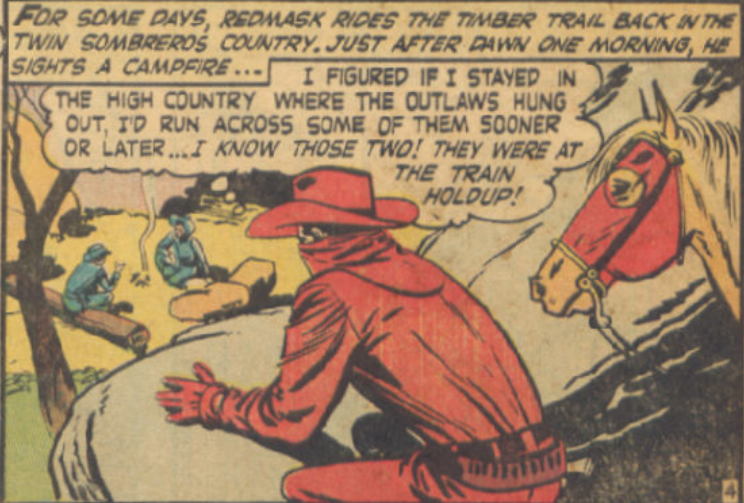
FOR HOURS, TIM LIES IN A DEEP COMA. WHEN HE OPENS HIS EYES, HE IS IN A HOTEL ROOM...



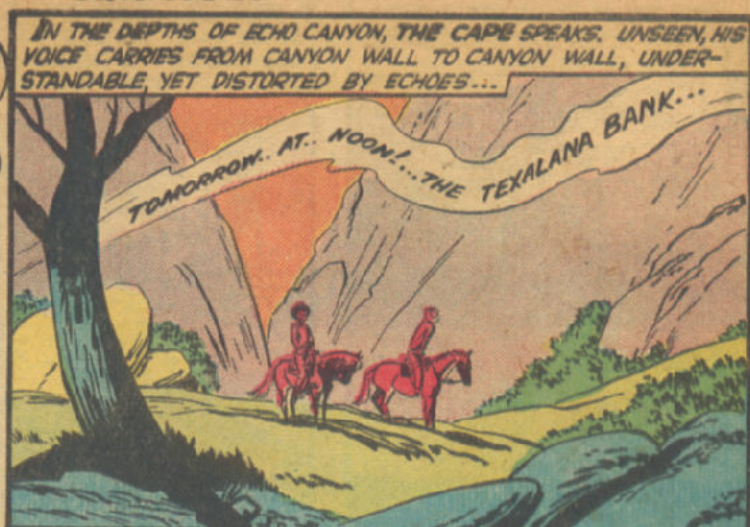
SOME DAYS LATER, ON THE CORROZA RANCH —



BUT TIM DOES NOT RIDE FAR —



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

NEXT DAY, AS THE CLOCK IN THE TEXALANA COUNCIL HOUSE BONGS OUT THE NOON HOUR—

I DON'T SEE MY MEN! THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE—



YOUR MEN AREN'T COMING, SENOR CAPE! BUT JUST SO YOU WOULDN'T BE DISAPPOINTED, I CAME TO KEEP YOU COMPANY!



SO LET ME TELL YOU THAT I EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO YOU!

AWWWKK!



YOU STUPID FOOL! I'LL FILL YOU SO FULL OF HOT LEAD—



YOU HAVE TO HIT ME FIRST!

DOOFFFF!

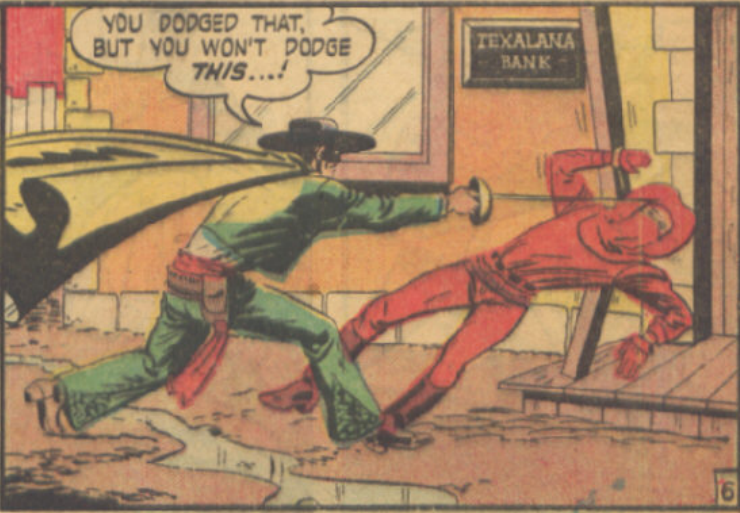


DRAGGING A DAGGER FROM HIS BELT, THE CAPE LASHES OUTWARD, BUT—

YOU'RE QUITE A CUT-UP, AREN'T YOU?



YOU DODGED THAT, BUT YOU WON'T DODGE THIS...!



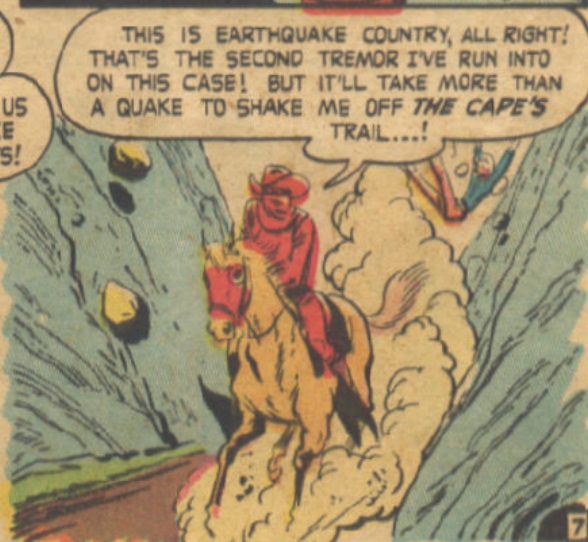
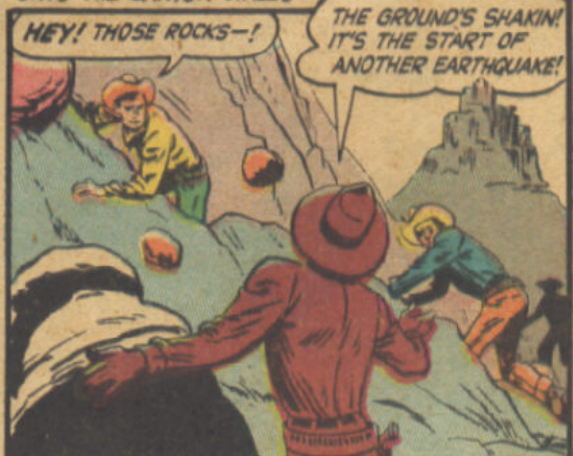
TIM HOLT



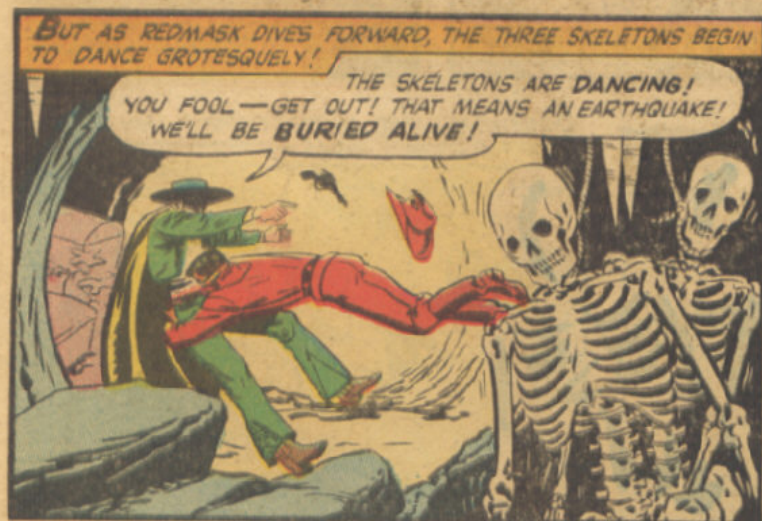
FAR AHEAD OF THE RACING REDMASK...



SOMEWHAT LATER, AS THE CAPE'S MEN CLAMBER ONTO THE CANYON WALLS—



TIM HOLT



THE SHORING PLANKS SPLIT! THE WALLS CRACK! UNDER AN AVALANCHE OF ROCKS, REDMASK CARRIES A DAZED CAPE THROUGH THE DOWNPOURING DEBRIS!



TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT

'WAY FOR THE TRAVELLING MEDICINE SHOW!' 'WAY FOR THE JUGGLERS, THE ACROBATS!' 'WAY FOR THE PROFESSOR, THE SLICKEST SELLER OF INDIAN ROOT CURE-ALL OIL FROM MONTANA TO THE BORDER!

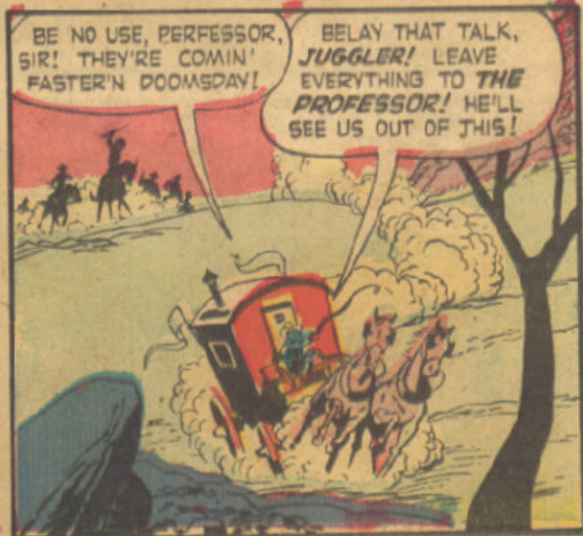
AND WHERE THE PROFESSOR GOES WITH HIS WAGONS OF MEDICINE—THERE GOES CRIME! FOR BEHIND THE RED AND GILT FRONT OF THE WAGON RIDES AS UNHOLY A BAND OF CUT-THROAT CRIMINALS AS EVER HELD UP A STAGECOACH!

WHEN REDMASK MEETS THE PROFESSOR AND HIS MEDICINE SHOW, HE FINDS HIMSELF FIGHTING FOR HIS VERY LIFE AGAINST—

"THE DEVIL'S OWN!"



BULLETS PLOW THE GROUND BEFORE THE HOOPS OF RUNNING HORSES AS THE PROFESSOR AND HIS MEDICINE SHOW FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES —



TIM HOLT



WE'LL CATCH 'EM, BOYS! THEY SLIPPED OUT OF TOWN AT DAWN. BUT THEY DIDN'T GET FAR!

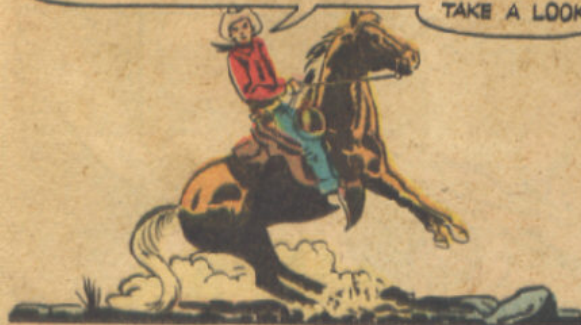
BEFORE THEY LEFT THEY HELD UP THE STAGECOACH OFFICE AN' RAILROAD DEPOT!

CROOKS, THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE! A TRAVELLIN' MEDICINE SHOW OF ORNERY POLECAT THIEVES!

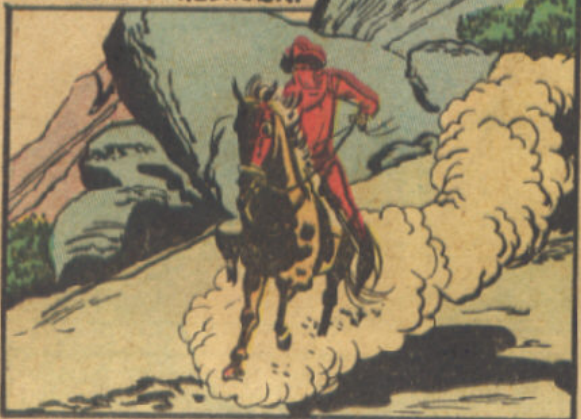
RIDING UP FROM THE 'LLANA ESTACADO' COUNTRY, COMES TIM HOLT, RETURNING FROM HIS CLASH WITH THE CAPE...

STEADY, LIGHTNING! THAT'S GUNFIRE FROM THE LOW COUNTRY! HENRY RIFLES! WINCHESTERS! LET'S TAKE A LOOK!

TEN OR TWELVE HEAVILY ARMED RIDERS—FIRING AT A DEFENCELESS MEDICINE SHOW BARKER! I HAVE NO LOVE FOR MEDICINE SHOWS, BUT I CAN'T STAND BY AND SEE MURDER DONE!

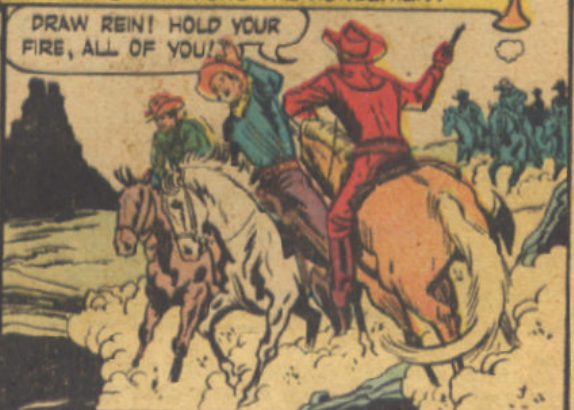


SECONDS LATER, FROM A CLUMP OF MESQUITE BURSTS THE FIGURE OF REDMASK!



AT FULL GALLOR THE GIANT GOLDEN STALLION CATAPULTS IN AMONG THE HORSEMEN!

DRAW REIN! HOLD YOUR FIRE, ALL OF YOU!



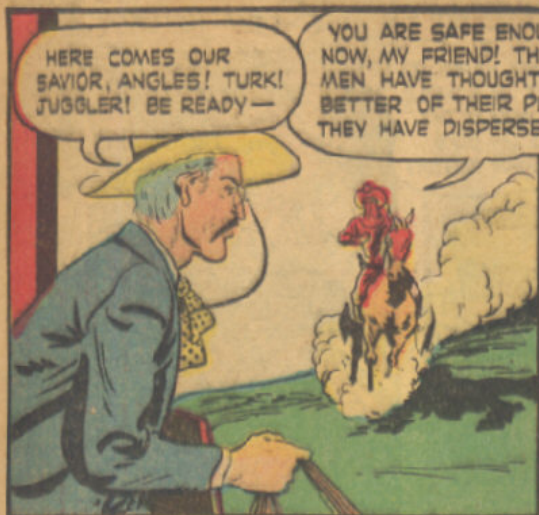
HOMBRE—I SAID—STOP SHOOTING!

Yiiii!!

NOW TURN AROUND, ALL OF YOU! VAMOSE! PRONTO! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR QUARREL IS, BUT WHAT YOU HAD IN MIND WAS—MURDER!



TIM HOLT



HERE COMES OUR SAVIOR, ANGLES! TURK! JUGGLER! BE READY—

YOU ARE SAFE ENOUGH NOW, MY FRIEND! THOSE MEN HAVE THOUGHT BETTER OF THEIR PLANS. THEY HAVE DISPERSED...



OUR PROFOUND GRATITUDE, SIR. I AM **THE PROFESSOR**, DISPENSER OF THE CURE-ALL OIL. MAY I PRESENT **TINY TURK**, MY STRONG MAN... MY JUGGLER, **OLD ENGLISH**!...MY CONTORTIONIST, **ANGLES**!

YOU HAD BEST BE ON YOUR WAY, THOSE MEN MIGHT RETURN...

AND SO THE PATHS OF REDMASK AND THE PROFESSOR AND HIS MEDICINE SHOW MEET AND PART. SOME WEEKS LATER, ON THE T-BAR-H RANCH, TIM RECEIVES A LETTER...



EEES BAD NEWS YOU READ, TIM?

THE BOYS WE SENT SOUTH INTO MEXICO WITH THAT HERD WERE ROBBED AND BEATEN! THEY SOLD THE HERD—THEN LOST THE MONEY IN THE ROBBERY!

PLUMB BAD!



YOU ARE GO ALONE!

IT'S BETTER THAT WAY. YOU STAY HERE AND KEEP THE RANCH GOING! I'LL SEND A TELEGRAM IN TOWN ORDERING THE BOYS TO RETURN. I WANT TO PLAY A LONE HAND...

FIVE HUNDRED MILES AWAY, IN THE MEXICAN TOWN OF PINTAR...



NEVER SICK A DAY IN HIS LIFE! OBSERVE THE MASSIVE MUSCULAR FORMATION, THE STRENGTH! HE DRINKS **CURE-ALL-OIL** EVERY DAY, DOES LITTLE TURK!

THAT'S REAL IRON! I TOUCHED EET!



MY COLLEAGUE WILL PASS AMONG YOU TO RECEIVE YOUR KIND DONATIONS! I MYSELF WILL PASS OUT THE RARE INDIAN ELIXIR AS YOU LINE UP BEFORE ME...



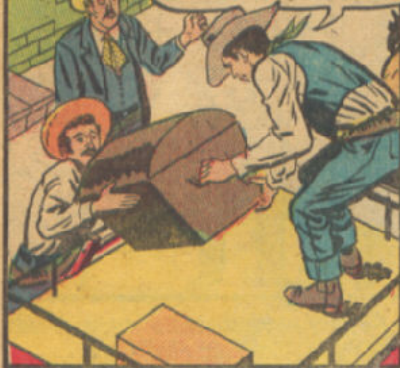
CRIME PAYS US WELL, GENTLEMEN! NOT BAD—BUT IT'S ONLY PEANUTS COMPARED TO WHAT WE CAN DO! TURK—IS THAT TRUNK READY?

IT IS, PROFESSOR. IT HAS BEEN READY A WEEK, AND IT HAS THE LOCK THAT ENABLES ONE TO OPEN IT—FROM THE INSIDE!

TIM HOLT

NEXT DAY AT DAWN, THE PROFESSOR TAKES A HEAVILY LADEN TRUNK TO THE SONORA STAGECOACH RELAY DEPOT...

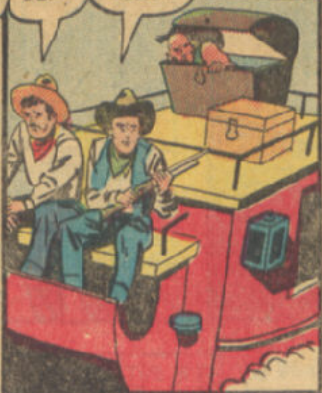
BE CAREFUL, GENTLEMEN. IT HAS BOTTLES OF MY RARE INDIAN CURE IN IT! THET THERE OIL MUST HAVE LEAD FLOATIN' IN IT, TO MAKE IT SO HEAVY! OWWF!



HOURS LATER, SOMEWHERE ALONG THE TRAIL...

LAZY SORT OF LIFE, HEY, JED?

SURE IS! NOthin' EVER HAPPENS! WISH ONCE IN A WHILE, SOMEBODY WOULD TRY HOLDIN' US UP SO'S I COULD FIRE BETSEY HERE!



JUST SO YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE TINY TURK! AHHH—NOW I SHALL HAVE FREE REIN OF ALL THAT THE STAGECOACH CONTAINS!

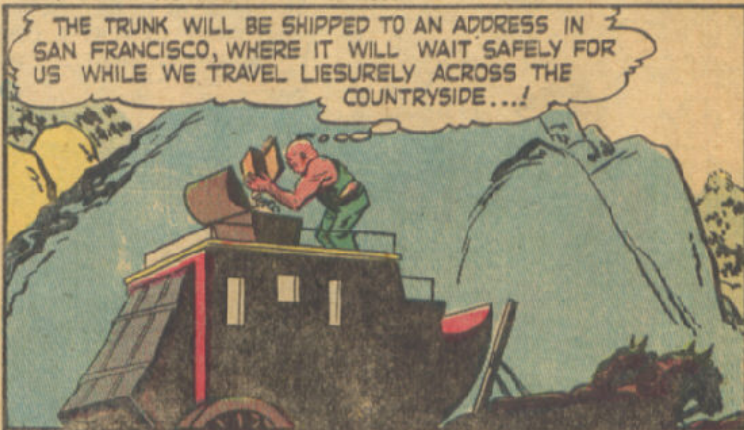


AS THE SUN LOWERS IN THE SKY, TIM HOLT REINS IN A HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE STAGECOACH...

DRIVER AND GUARD ON THE GROUND! THE STAGECOACH STOPPED! I THINK REDMASK SHOULD HANDLE THIS!



THE TURK'S GREAT MUSCLES BULGE AS HE LIFTS GOLDEN INGOTS SCOOPED FROM THE SONORA GOLD MINES, AND STORES THEM CAREFULLY IN THE NOW EMPTY TRUNK...



DUNNO JEST WHAT DID HAPPEN, AMIGO! ALL OF A SUDDEN SOMETHING HIT JED. WHEN I TURNED TO SEE WHAT IT WAS—IT HIT ME, TOO!

SOMEONE MUST HAVE BEEN HIDDEN ON THE COACH. I'LL HAVE A LOOK AROUND...



TIM HOLT



THERE'S BOUND TO BE SOME CLUE! NOBODY WAS IN OR ON THE STAGE BUT YOU TWO. YOU'D HAVE HEARD ANYBODY RIDING UP. SOMEONE WAS HIDDEN IN THE STAGE—

IMPOSSIBLE!

SURE! WE NEVER CARRY PASSENGERS ON A GOLD RUN!

YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A PASSENGER, BUT YOU DID! SEE HERE! A SMALL IMPRINT OF A BARE FOOT! A TINY FOOT!

NO CHILD COULD HAVE HIT US THAT HARD!

THIS DON'T MAKE NO SENSE AT ALL!



REDMASK—THE MAN WHO SAVED US FROM THOSE TOWNSFOLK BACK IN ARIZONA! I'D BETTER TELL THE PROFESSOR ABOUT THIS! MAYBE HE'LL HAVE SOME IDEA WHAT TO DO...



WHILE ALL EYES ARE ON THE JUGGLER AND ANGLES, THE CONTORTIONIST, THE PROFESSOR EXTRACTS THE MONEY, CLOSES AND LOCKS THE BOX...



THEY SURE PUT ON A GREAT SHOW!

THAT NIGHT, AS ALL PINTAR GATHERS FOR A TOWN DANCE IN THE GOLDEN COAST SALOON...

QUITE A GATHERING, MY FRIEND! WHAT IS THE OCCASION?

A DANCE TO SET UP A YOUNG COUPLE WHO ARE GETTIN' MARRIED. THEY GET EVERYTHING WE COLLECT. IT'S SORT OF A PINTAR CUSTOM...



AS THE PROFESSOR TALKS ON AND ON, HIS SLIM DEFT HAND INSERTS A MASTER KEY INTO THE METAL BOX—

GO ON, MY FRIEND! TELL ME MORE. I AM MOST INTERESTED IN THE CUSTOMS AND HABITS OF THE VARIOUS TOWNS I VISIT. IT BROADENS MY EDUCATION...



FINE PERFORMANCE, JUGGLER! HERE, HIDE THIS IN THE HOLLOW CLUB, QUICKLY! AS SOON AS THE MONEY IS MISSED, EVERYONE WILL BE SEARCHED!

PROFESSOR—BAD NEWS!



TIM HOLT



AFTER MORE THAN THREE HOURS OF EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH, THE DANCE GATHERING BREAKS UP —





TIM HOLT



WE MISSED HIM! WATCH OUT, ANGLES!



NOW YOU'RE ON THE RECEIVING END!

I'VE GOT A LEG-CLAMP ON HIM! I'VE GOT HIM!

BUT AS ANGLES' POWERFUL LEGS TIGHTEN WITH BONE-CRUSHING POWER, REDMASK THROWS HIMSELF SIDWAYS —



HANG ON, ANGLES! YOU'RE GOING FOR A RIDE — AND A SUDDEN STOP!



I'VE CAUGHT ALL OF THEM BUT THE PROFESSOR — AND HE CAN'T BE FAR AWAY! ONE OF HIS HORSES IS GONE — HE MUST BE ON IT!



A SHORT DISTANCE OUT OF TOWN — DON'T BOTHER RIDING ANY FURTHER, PROFESSOR! YOUR SHOW HAS BEEN CLOSED...FOR GOOD!



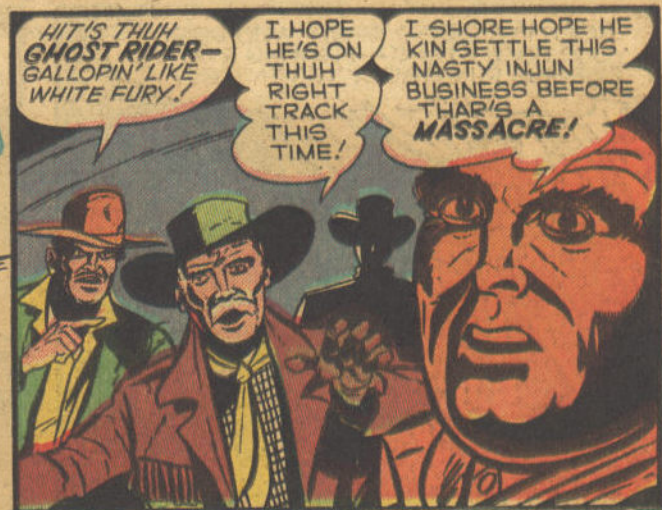
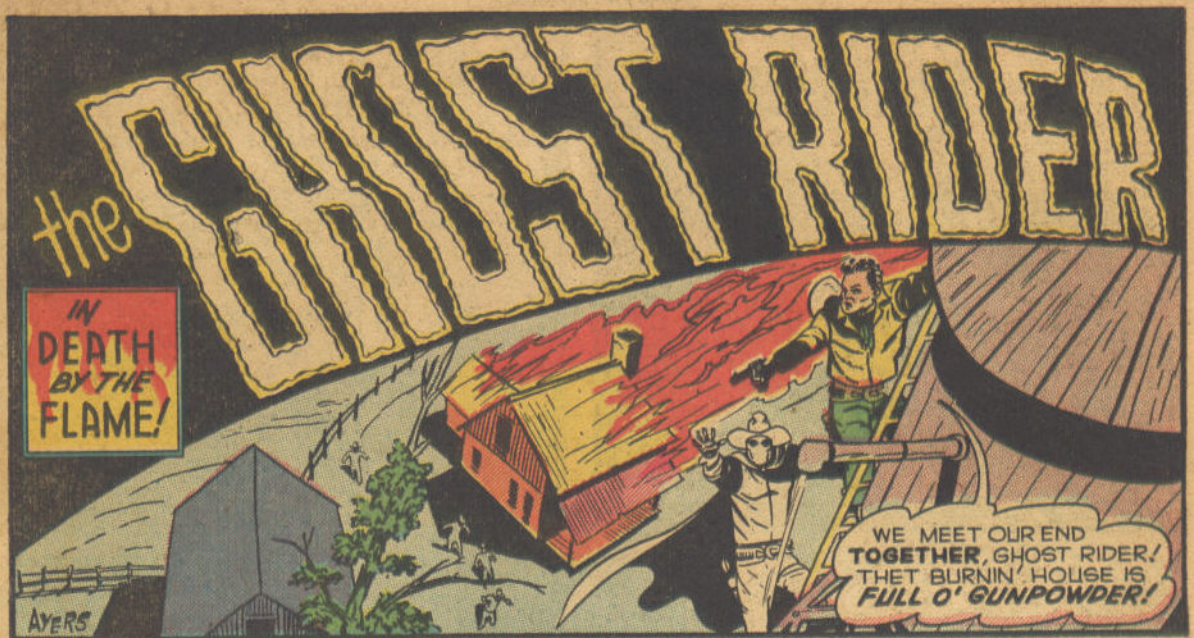
YOU CAN'T PROVE A THING!

DON'T BE SILLY, PROFESSOR!



WE OPENED YOUR TRUNK ON THE SONORA STAGE. IT WAS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE TINY TURK COULD HAVE HIDDEN. WE FOUND IT FULL OF GOLD ORE. NOW — ON YOUR FEET, PROFESSOR! IF THEY HURT BY THE TIME YOU WALK BACK TO THE PINTAR JAIL, YOU CAN SMEAR YOUR CURE-ALL OIL OVER THEM...!

THE END



TIM HOLT

SWIFTLY, THE GHOST RIDER STREAKS THROUGH THE MOONLIT NIGHT— AND, A SHORT TIME LATER...



IT'S THE REAL THING THIS TIME!... BY THUNDER, IT'S EBENEZER JORGIS! SO HE'S BEHIND ALL THIS!

ALL THERE AS WE ORDERED! BUT TELL US, WHITE MAN— WHY DO YOU SELL US THESE RIFLES AND GUNPOWDER? DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT WE WILL USE THEM AGAINST YOUR OWN PEOPLE?

WAL, I'LL BE FRANK WITH YOU, CHIEF...



...THAT'S MONEY IN IT, CHIEF— YOU PAY ME WELL! AN' THAT'S ALL I CARE ABOUT— LITTLE ME! ALSO— AS LONG AS YOU DEPEND ON ME TUH GIT YORE ARMAMENTS FER YUH, I'M SAFE!



YOU ARE A TRAITOR TO YOUR OWN PEOPLE, JORGIS— BUT THAT IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE. WE WILL DO BUSINESS WITH YOU!

I'LL DROP THIS LITTLE BAG OF GUNPOWDER INTO THE FIRE...

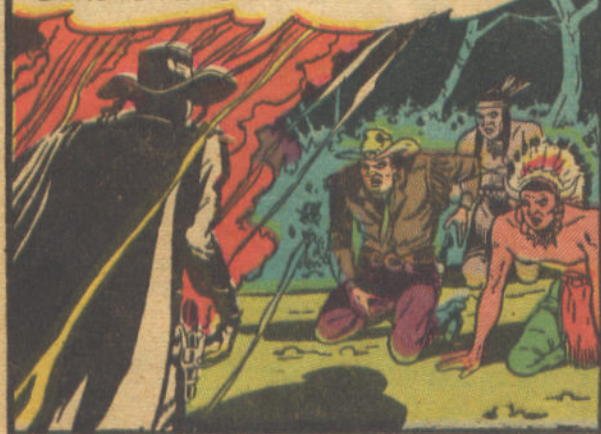


WHUT THUH—!?!?

CAN IT BE THAT EVIL SPIRITS ARE WITH US?



NO! IT IS A GOOD SPIRIT WHO DOGS YOUR FOOTSTEPS— FIGHTING EVIL AND BRINGING PUNISHMENT TO TRAITORS!

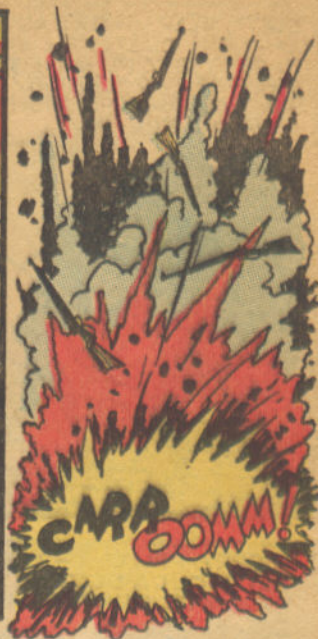


THE GHOST RIDER! YIIIIIEEE!

DROP THAT GUN, EBENEZER JORGIS!



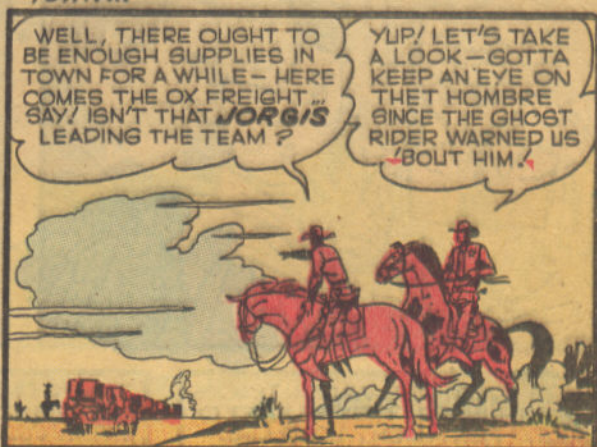
TIM HOLT



WHEN THE FIRE AND FLAME DIES DOWN, THE GHOST RIDER IS GONE — BUT JORGIS REMAINS...

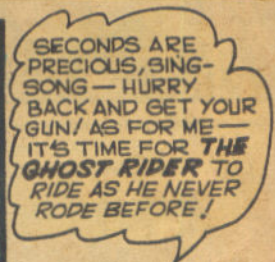
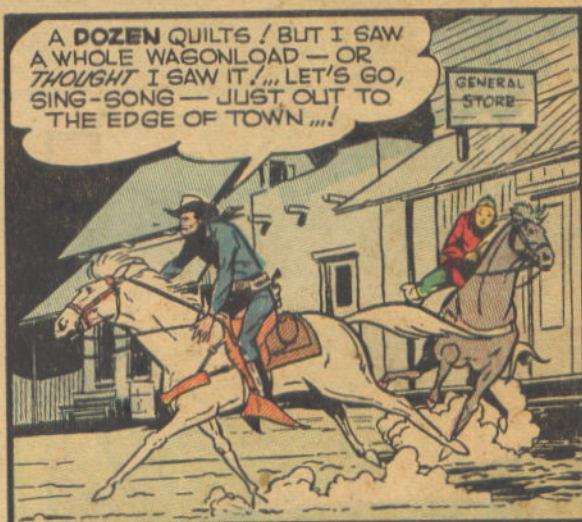
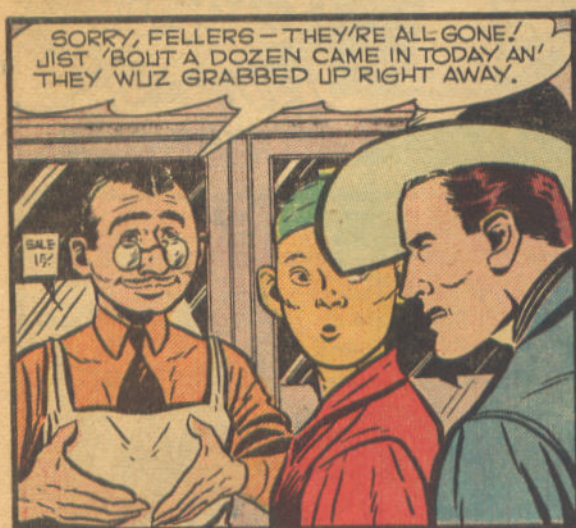


MANY WEEKS LATER, REX FURY AND SHERIFF HENDRIX GUARD THE ROAD THAT LEADS INTO TOWN...

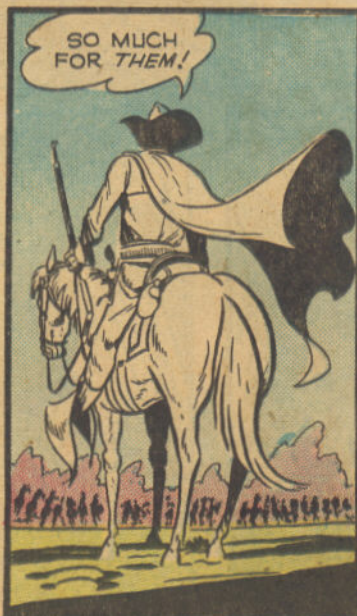
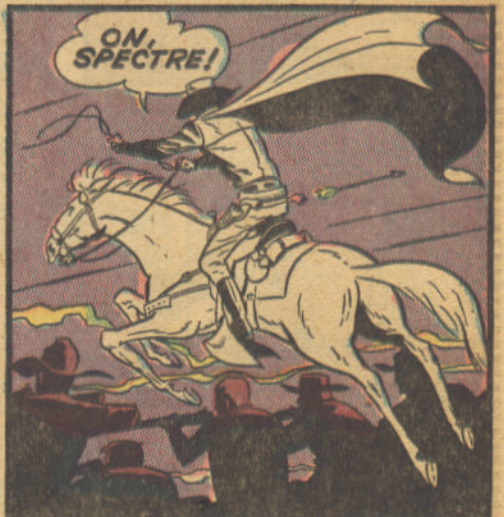
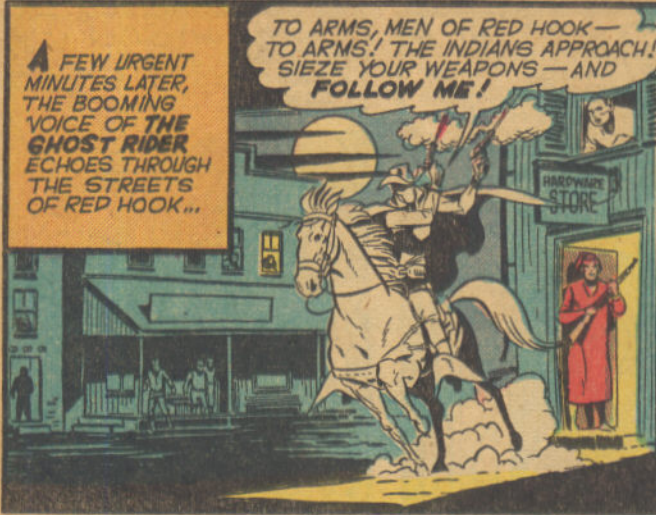


WAL, I'M SHORE GLAD TUH HEAR THET! LOOKS LIKE JORGIS WENT STRAIGHT — THET'S FINE. YES, IT'S FINE ALL RIGHT — IF TRUE...

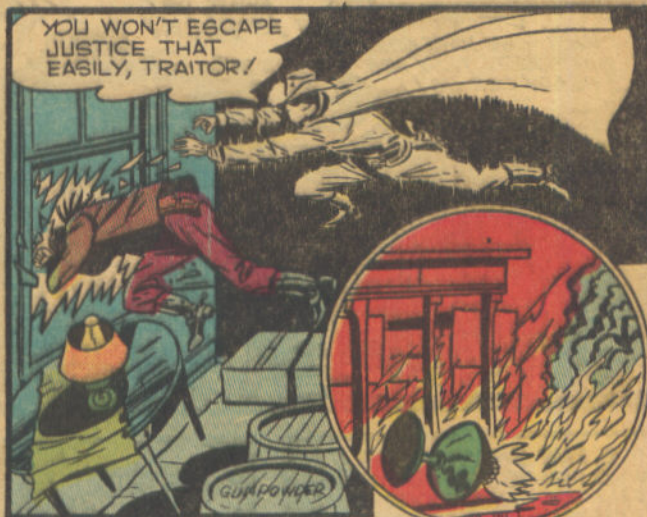




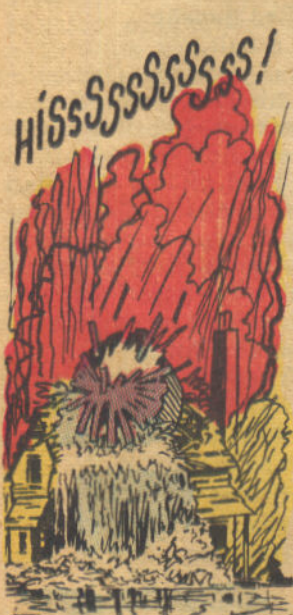
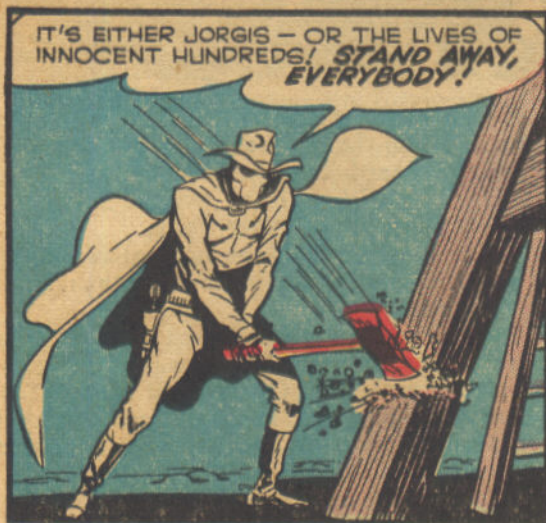
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DYNAMITE!

THE diamond-stack locomotive swayed and strained as it reached the crest of the Medicine Bow Hills. Stretched before it was a long flat of cacti-dotted prairie. Somewhere among those elongated ocotillo or staghorn was "Dusty" Rhodes and his owl-hoot crew. Everyone knew the bandit bunch was going to make a try for the big gold shipment in the baggage car. They had said so, back in Willow Gap, with gloomy shakings of heads.

Ok Gifford sat in the baggage car and rubbed his palms on his blue levis. He shivered despite the warmth of the hot car, and loosened his big Colts. The Willow Gap Shipping Company had hired him for this job because of his speed with a gun. They had taken their regular express messenger off at Willow Bend, and put him in the car instead.

"This isn't like fightin' a man with a gun, though," growled Ok, rising and stretching. "This is like bein' locked inside a box and bein' told somebody is out gunnin' for yuh! You don't know when or where or how it's going to happen!"

He fumbled for a cigarette and remembered that he had been forbidden to smoke. Instead of the makin's, he found a plug of chewing tobacco. Ok stared at it in disgust.

"Chaw tobacco!" he snarled, and lifted his hand to throw it away. He paused. Still, chaw tobacco was better than no tobacco! Tentatively, he lifted the brown plug to his teeth and bit off a chew.

Ok remembered his father handling the ribbons of the big Conestoga wagon, chewing tobacco and spitting it with the accuracy of a Winchester at a snake or twig along the trail. *Faauggh*, he thought. *How could Pop ever have stood this stuff?*

He was getting ready to rid himself of the tobacco when the first revolver shot erupted. Then he heard the thunder of galloping hoofs, the shrill yells of excited men, the thudding reports of other Colts.

Ok grabbed for his guns and leaped for the big sliding doors, shoving one of them back to lean out.

There were six masked men galloping up near the engine. One of them was shooting in at the engine cab. Ok snarled and threw down with his gun. He fired, and grunted with satisfaction as one of the riders slid senselessly out of the saddle.

But now one of the outlaws was swinging up onto the cab. A man screamed in agony, and there was a muffled gunshot.

The car braked to a halt.

Ok knew what was coming. *Dynamite!* "Dusty" Rhodes and his killers would toss a dozen shafts of peppermint-striped explosive at the sliding doors, and he'd be lucky if the blast didn't take his head off his shoulders.

He threw two more shells at the masked men, then drew back to slam the big doors. "If it was up to me," he said, "I'd leave it open and shoot it out with them!" Yet even as he spoke, Ok realized that he could never handle all those outlaws by himself!

The doors closed. The lock fell into place. Ok drew back, guns in his hands, feeling strangely helpless and cut off from what was going on outside. He looked up at the roof, wondering if Dusty Rhodes would find a way to drop a stick of dynamite down his neck while he was expecting the blow to come from the doors.

He ran to the doors and put his head against the wood, trying to hear through it.

Restless, he holstered his Colts and ran to the other side.

There was no noise, no sign of —

Baaroooom!

The blast took him off his feet in a whirling tornado of red and black, studded with glowing lightning. He landed against the crated gold ore from the hill mines, hitting with a shuddering impact that seemed to wrench every bone from its socket. His legs and arms flopped uselessly, and he fell forward on his face.

Something came and dug a splintery shower from the bare wooden floor and threw the splinters in his face. A bullet! They were shooting at him! As he turned his cheek where it lay heavily on the floor, he could see through the slits in the baggage car doors. They were out there, beyond the doors, firing in at him.

Ok tried to lift his right arm. He tugged and yanked at it, but it felt like a lead bar tied to his shoulder. He tugged until the sweat came and stood on his forehead, until he got his Colt in front of him.

Just as the man's shadow fell across the splintered door, he fired. The man screamed something in a gurgling voice, and fell away.

"— can't do more than take potshots at us," somebody yelled. "I say go in an' GET him!"

"Yuh danged idiot, thet's Ok Gifford in there! He's a bad man with a shootin' iron! He's got three of us a'ready!"

They drew back to palaver, out of earshot of the man lying on his stomach in the baggage car. Idly, Ok wondered where the rest of the men on the train had gone. He did not know, for he could not see, that Dusty Rhodes and his men had marched them off a hundred yards away; where they watched, in sullen-eyed sympathy, the fight of one man against six killers.

Ok knew that fight could have only one ending. Rhodes and his owlhoot crew had dynamite. They could toss a stick or two across the room, where he could not crawl, and —

Desperately, Ok tried to move. His strength was returning, but something was stopping him. With a keen stab of fear he thought, *Maybe my back is broken!*

He rolled over until he lay on his back, and the effort exhausted him. Bitterly he swore at his weakness. He tried and tried again to turn over so that he could be facing the splintered baggage door when the attack came again, but he could not make it.

Easy, he told himself, just take this nice an' easy, like you was gentlin' a bronc —

Dusty led the attack at the door. They came with blasting sixguns that flamed and danced in their hands, pelting the interior of the car with hurtling lead that would have torn apart anything in its path.

But Ok Gifford was helpless on his back behind a crate of crude mine gold, and the bullets went all around and over him, but none touched him. He got a left hand on the heavy crate and yanked himself up against it, to his knees, just as the three men came crashing through the splintered door and saw him kneeling there.

One of the men screamed, and clawed for his holstered gun. Ok shot him an inch below his belt buckle. The second man dove straight down to the floor, snapping a shot as he fell, and caught Ok's second bullet right above his left eye. He was rolling, dead, when he hit the floor.

The third man tried to dive back out of the car, and fell with a bullet in his hip. Ok heard him yell, "Throw in a stick of dynamite! Throw in the dynamite!"

There was the sound of running footsteps. Ok tried to move from his kneeling position, but he was too weak. If they threw in that dynamite now —

His mouth dried up as the striped stick came hurtling in through the smashed door, hit the floor and rolled across from him, to lodge against a mailsack. He stared at it. Fifteen feet away! He could not reach it —

He tried to lift his gun, but it was so heavy that it shook in his hand. If he missed the sizzling, lighted fuse, and hit the dynamite itself . . . Ok shuddered.

His mouth worked, and he felt the ball of half-chewed tobacco that he had bitten off and kept in his mouth all through the fight in the baggage car. He bit down on it, began to chew.

Pop used to hit a dime at twenty feet with this stuff, he thought. I don't have to be that accurate!

He tried once, and failed. He tried twice. On his third try, just as the flaming fuse was touching the striped paper of the wrapped dynamite, the brownish liquid splattered all over it, extinguishing the fuse. The dynamite lay there, stained a dull brown. Useless!

There was silence in the car. Outside, a distant thud of gunfire and galloping hoofs told Ok that help had arrived: probably some rancher who had heard the first dynamite stick detonate, and had stopped to gather a crew of riders. Ok suddenly let go, and fell forward, stretched out unconscious on the floor.

He opened his eyes to hot sunlight. A pretty woman was bathing his face with water. A doctor was smiling down, nodding, rolling down his sleeves.

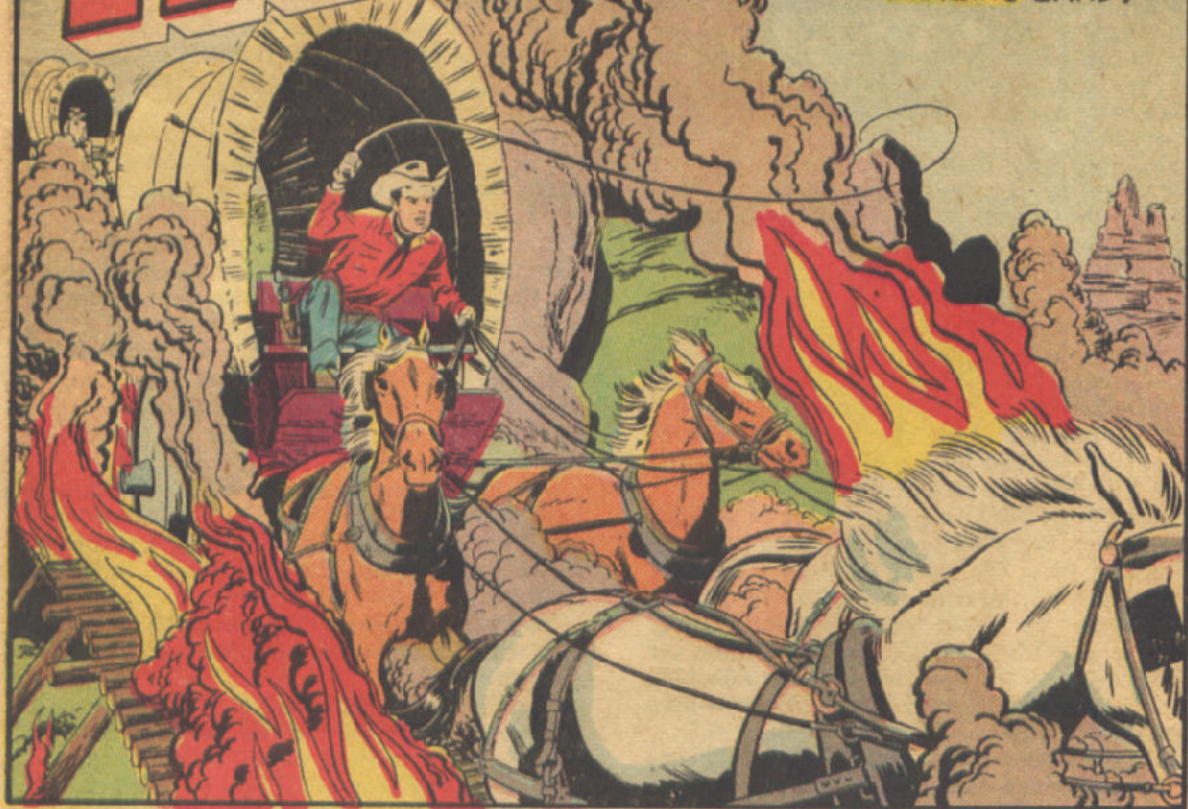
The doctor said, "Temporary shock and muscular paralysis. You'll be as good as new, come tomorrow. Er— with a slight stomach ache. In all the excitement, you swallowed your chewing tobacco!"

THE END

TIM HOLT

HIS NAME WAS BUCK HASTINGS, AND HIS HANDS WERE SHAPED TO HANDLE THE REINS AND THE BIG BULLWHIPS OF THE FREIGHT WAGON TEAMSTERS. BUT WHEN BIG BUCK TRIES TO RAMROD HIS WAGONS THROUGH THE DREADED APACHE TERRITORY, HE FINDS THOSE HANDS HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF INDIAN SCALP KNIVES AND WAR LANCES!

AND THEN TIM HOLT STEPS IN, TO TAKE A PLACE IN THE FOREMOST WAGON AND DRIVE IT AT THE GALLOP, STRAIGHT INTO—
"THE BLAZING LAND!"



FREIGHT TRAIN AFTER FREIGHT TRAIN, UNDER CONTRACT TO CARRY TRADE GOODS AND SUPPLIES THROUGH APACHE TERRITORY, MEET THE SAME FATE—DEATH ON A HOT PRAIRIE, UNDER THE STINGING HAIL OF APACHE ARROWS...

KIYA TADA SA! KIYA! KIYA!



TIM HOLT

LED BY CLAUDIO, THE APACHES KILL AND LOOT, THEN RUN FOR THE SAFETY OF THEIR PURPLE HILLS...



THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY, IN FORT LINCOLN...

BUCK, YOU'RE TAKING ON A MAN-SIZED JOB! WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET EVEN ONE FREIGHT TRAIN THROUGH THE TERRITORY! IT'S BEEN A DEATH WARRANT FOR EVERY MAN WHO WENT OUT IN THEM!

I'VE PUT MY LIFE SAVINGS INTO THIS, COLONEL! IT'S MAKE OR BREAK, FOR ME!

I'VE WORKED HARD ALL MY LIFE! I'VE SAVED AND SCRIMPED, JUST FOR THE CHANCE TO OWN MY OWN FREIGHTING OUTFIT! IF I CAN GET THE WAGONS THROUGH JUST ONCE! — I'LL GET A RICH GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WITH ARMY ESCORTS AND PROTECTION!

IT'S A GAMBLE I'M TAKING, MOLLY DARLING! I WANT YOU AND THE CHILDREN TO STAY BEHIND!

NO, BUCK. IF — IF YOU DIE... WE WANT TO DIE, TOO! WE'RE COMING WITH YOU!



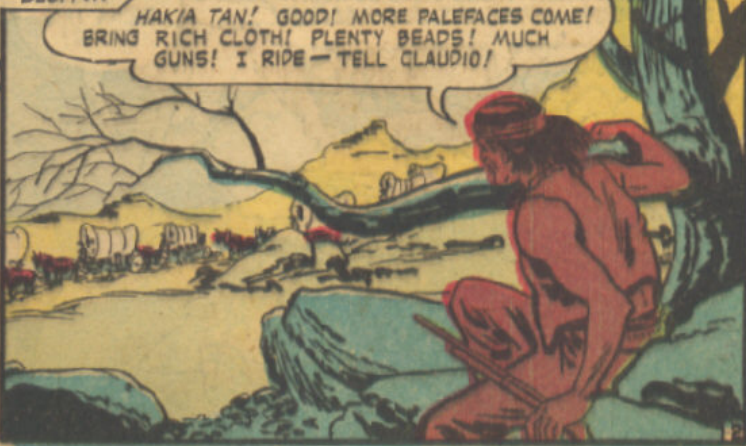
SIGH! THEY AIN'T GOT THE CHANCE OF A RABBIT IN A WOLF DEN! TOO BAD, TOO!

I HATE TO THINK OF THE WOMEN AN' CHILDREN FALLIN' INTO APACHE'S HANDS! BUT NO FREIGHTERS WILL EVER GET THROUGH THE TERRITORY!



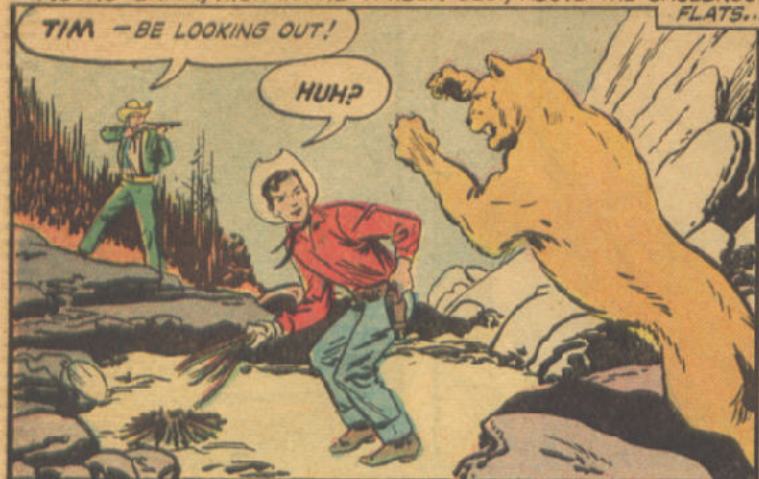
WEEKS LATER, AS THE LUMBERING VANS SLIDE ONTO THE FLATS OF APACHE COUNTRY, HARD BLACK EYES GLITTER HIGH ON A ROCKY BLUFF...

HAK'A TAN! GOOD! MORE PALEFACES COME! BRING RICH CLOTH! PLENTY BEADS! MUCH GUNS! I RIDE — TELL CLAUDIO!



TIM HOLT

HOURS LATER, HIGH IN THE TIMBER BELT, ABOVE THE SAGEBRUSH FLATS...

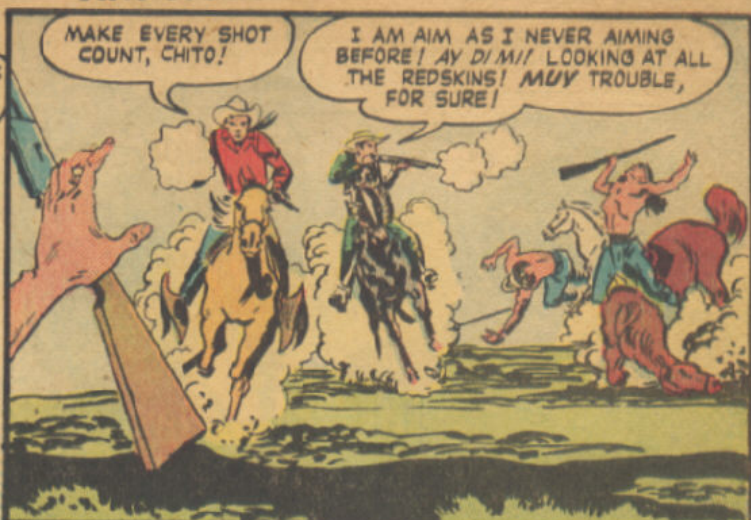


TIM HOLT



HOLD ON, HASTINGS! LOOK! TWO WHITE MEN—RIDING HARD THIS WAY!

WHAT CAN TWO MEN DO? WHAT WE NEED IS CUSTER'S SEVENTH CAVALRY TO FIGHT THEM FIENDS OFF!



MAKE EVERY SHOT COUNT, CHITO!

I AM AIM AS I NEVER AIMING BEFORE! AY DI MI! LOOKING AT ALL THE REDSKINS! MUY TROUBLE, FOR SURE!



GET YOUR MEN INTO THOSE WAGONS, PRONTO! HURRY! WOUNDED AND WELL GO INSIDE!

HE MUST BE LOCO!



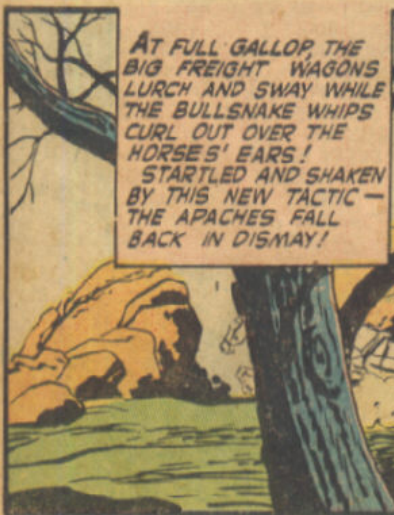
JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO CAPTAIN BALDWIN PUT ARMY TROOPS IN WAGONS TO FIGHT INDIANS! IT BROKE THEIR RANKS AND ENABLED HIM TO RESCUE TWO WHITE GIRLS! DO WHAT I SAY!

I'LL DO ANYTHING TO ESCAPE THOSE SAVAGES!

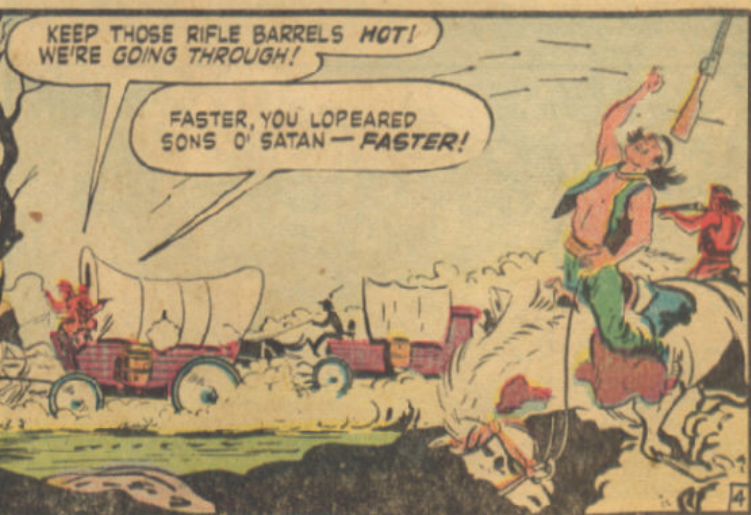


ROARING ORDERS, LIFTING THE WOUNDED CAREFULLY BUT DRIVING THE UNWOUNDED WITH VIGOR, BUCK FILLS HIS FREIGHTERS

YOU MEN INSIDE ARE PROTECTED BY STOUT OAK WAGONSIDES! BUT YOU, YOURSELVES CAN SHOOT! SO POUR THE HOT LEAD INTO THEM WHILE BUCK AND I KEEP THE HORSES AT THE GALLOP...



AT FULL GALLOP, THE BIG FREIGHT WAGONS LURCH AND SWAY WHILE THE BULLSNAKE WHIPS CURL OUT OVER THE HORSES' EARS! STARTLED AND SHAKEN BY THIS NEW TACTIC—THE APACHES FALL BACK IN DISMAY!



KEEP THOSE RIFLE BARRELS HOT! WE'RE GOING THROUGH!

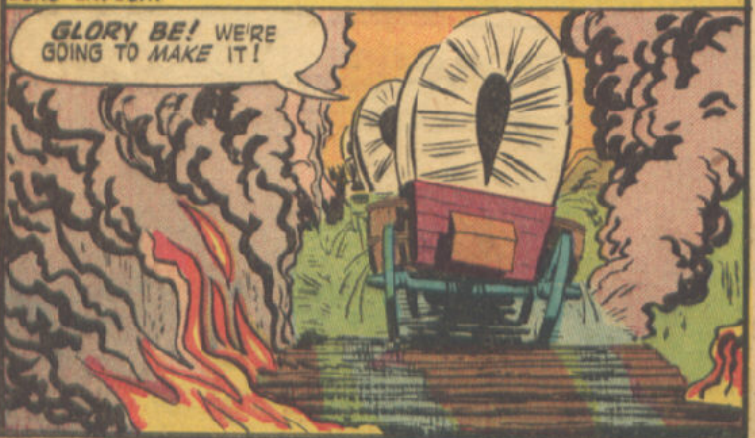
FASTER, YOU LOPEARED SONS O' SATAN—FASTER!



FIRE ARROW AFTER FIRE ARROW
WHISTLES THROUGH THE AIR, BRIGHT
RED FLAMES ROARING! WITH DULL
THUDS THE ARROWS HIT THE BRIDGE,
AND THE FIRE SPREADS...



**BENEATH THE HEAVY WHEELS, THE FIRE-TORTURED LOGS GROAN AND
SPLIT! BUT THE WATER KEEPS THE FLAMES WITHIN BOUNDS—JUST
LONG ENOUGH!**



TIM HOLT



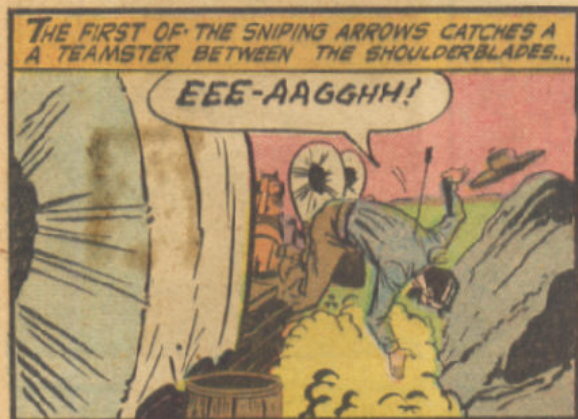
BEHIND THE FREIGHTERS, THE BRIDGE GOES DOWN IN A BURST OF FLAMING LOGS!



AGAIN THEY HAVE ELUDED ME!. BUT NOW THEIR WATER IS GONE, AND THE NEXT WATERHOLE MANY MILES DISTANT - THEY CAN RUN NO LONGER!



THE SUN IS HOT! THE LAND IS DRY! THE MEN IN THE FREIGHT WAGONS WILL BE THIRSTY! FORWARD, APACHES! WE WILL HARASS THEM AS THEY GO!



THE FIRST OF THE SNIPING ARROWS CATCHES A TEAMSTER BETWEEN THE SHOULDERBLADES...

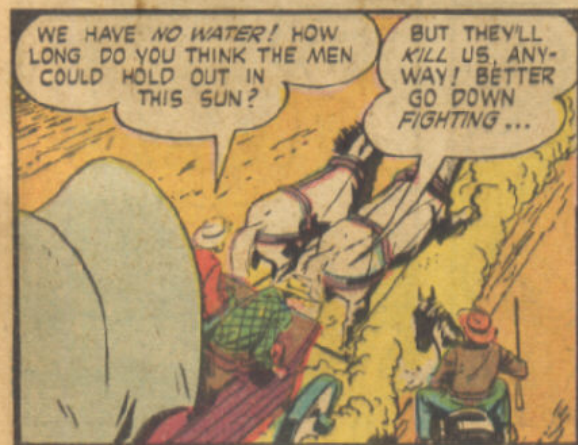
EEE-AAGGHH!

HERE AND THERE OTHER ARROWS STRIKE DOWN MORE TEAMSTERS - AS PANIC SPREADS AND VOICES CRY IN PROTEST!



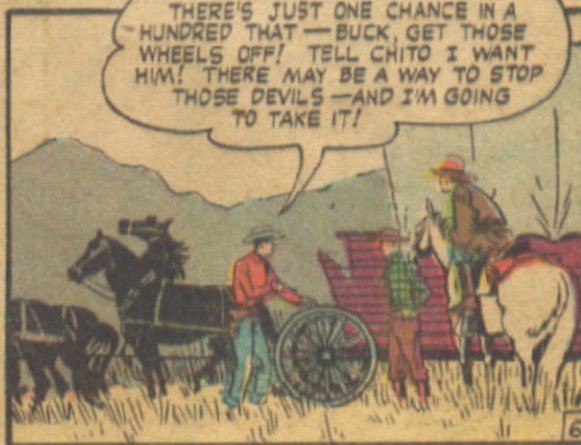
HOLT - WE CAN'T RUN ANYMORE! THOSE APACHES FOLLOW US, AND PICK US OFF ONE BY ONE! THE MEN WANT TO STAND AND FIGHT!

IF WE STAND, WE DIE! THOSE APACHES WOULD RIM US AND NEVER LET US THROUGH!



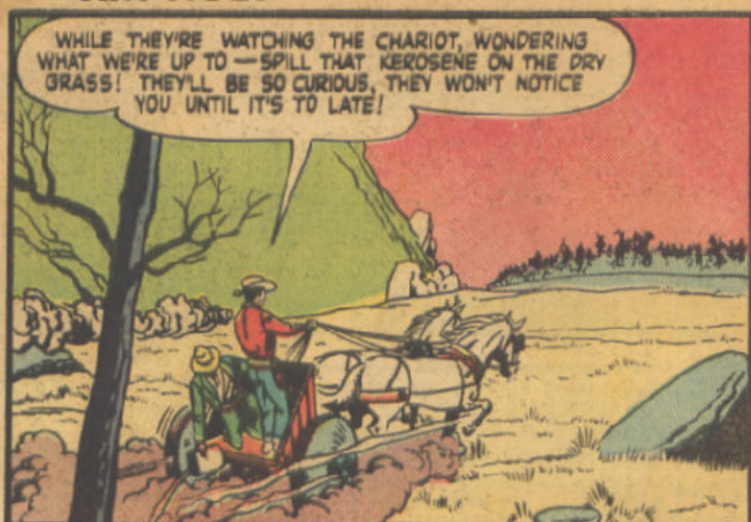
WE HAVE NO WATER! HOW LONG DO YOU THINK THE MEN COULD HOLD OUT IN THIS SUN?

BUT THEY'LL KILL US, ANYWAY! BETTER GO DOWN FIGHTING...

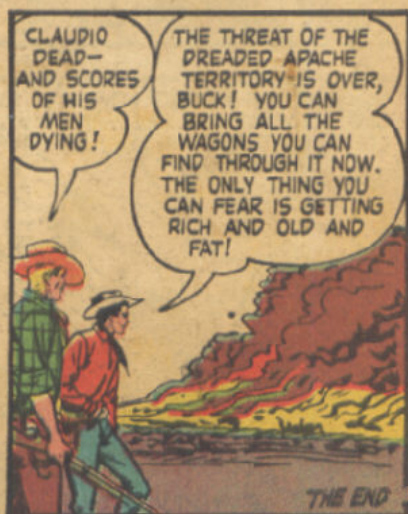
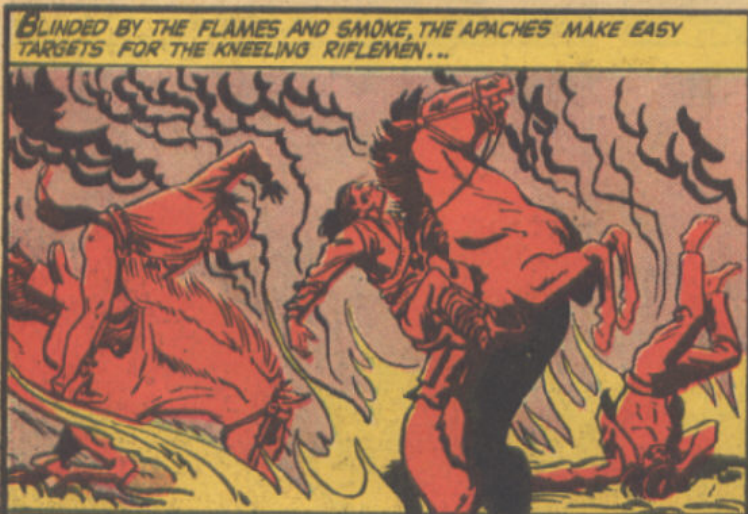
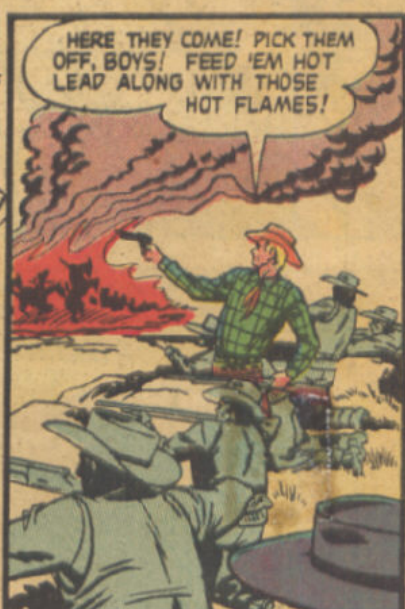


THERE'S JUST ONE CHANCE IN A HUNDRED THAT - BUCK, GET THOSE WHEELS OFF! TELL CHITO I WANT HIM! THERE MAY BE A WAY TO STOP THOSE DEVILS - AND I'M GOING TO TAKE IT!

TIM HOLT



TOO LATE, CLAUDIO UNDERSTANDS TIM'S TRICK! VOICE HOARSE WITH FURY, HE ORDERS HIS MEN INTO THE FLAMES! CRAZED BY RAGE, HE GALLOPS FORWARD THROUGH THE RED INFERNO...





CHITO JOSE GONZALEZ BUSTAMONTE RAFFERTY —
many-named, guitar-strumming sidekick of Tim Holt.

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